

POLITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND THE CONCEPT OF NATION

The study of isolated language utterances without social content leads to the field of formal linguistics, which nowadays is approximately neglected by contemporary linguists. The relationship between language and society has become the focus of a new paradigm. This turn has led linguists to the field of Political Discourse Analysis, the roots of which lie in the concepts of rhetoric, text linguistics and pragmatics. Political Discourse Analysis investigates language use in speech and writing as a form of social practice. If we consider discourse as a form of social practice, we imply a dialectical entity of the so-called discursive event and the situation, institution, social environment that shape it. The discursive event is not only framed by these factors, but it also frames them. "Discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people" (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, 258).

Language and politics have been interwoven for centuries. The problem of national identity is one of the most important aspects of political discourse analysis.

Nations might be considered as the largest groups sharing the same geographical territory, history, and culture." Nations are classified, distinguished by restricted borders and thereby cut off from the surrounding nations. A nation is acknowledged as a community with similar genetic code; people of the same nationality can trace back to their sacred or secular roots. "Members of even the smallest nations do not know the majority of their fellow - citizens; they do not meet, do not hear from one another, yet are still conscious of their unique national community" (Wodak, 2002, 146).

Specific features characterize a nation as a large and unified entity of people. In his investigation of the different aspects of everyday life, Hunt revealed group symbols, which characterize national consciousness.

Conventional structures or the so-called group specific rules should be viewed on the symbolic level (Hunt, 1989).

National culture serves as a crucial component in outlining the concept of a nation.

Nations are viewed as not only political phenomenon but as "systems of cultural representations" (Anderson, 1988,15).

"A national culture is a discourse, a way to construct meanings, which influence and organize both our actions and our perceptions of ourselves. National cultures construct identities by creating meanings of 'the nation,' with which we can identify; these are contained in stories that are told about the nation, in memories which link its present to its past and in the perceptions of it that are constructed" (Hall, 1994, 200).

National identities are built on a common history; they have collective memory which maintains its historical continuity by recalling relevant elements from their past (Hallwachs,1985).

Linguists tend to classify national identity and national character under the same bracket, linking national identity with social practices. In his essay "Rethinking of the State" Bourdieu points out that state shapes certain forms of perception, which later become a constituent of a national common sense.

"Through classificatory systems (especially according to sex and age) inscribed in law, through bureaucratic procedures, educational structures and social rituals (particularly salient in the case of Japan and England), the state moulds mental structures and imposes common principles of vision and division. And it thereby contributes to the construction of what is commonly designated as national identity (or, on a more traditional language, national character) (Bourdieu 1994b :7f.).

Politicians incorporate this socially constructed phenomenon of culture and identity in their pursuit of impacting citizens.

In my opinion, national identity and national culture should not be heavily distinguished as culture itself is a crucial piece of national identity. Culture shapes a person, enriching his national character. If one is raised without a cultural background, his sense of belonging to the nation becomes extremely vague. Moreover, emigration dismantles key aspects of identity as most immigrants lose their national qualities. Foreign culture gradually penetrates into everyday life, eradicating elements of one's own culture.

Nowadays we are witnessing an uprising trend of ethnic homogenization as more modern nations are becoming culturally hybrid. The United States is a perfect example of a culturally hybrid phenomenon, a melting pot in which various national identities exist parallel to one another.

Different ethnic, racial and religious groups have all contributed to the creation of America's rich and unique culture. Though their culture is diverse, Americans share a collective political history. Political triumphs and declines, coupled with times of flourishing prosperity and crisis unified the Americans as a nation. Newcomer citizens of different nations and cultures were led by the leaders of their countries. The standard politician's primary goal was to establish and maintain the atmosphere of solidarity and union. Public propaganda was achieved through diverse linguistic means. This very idea of a nation's unification is apparent in most political speeches.

The appeal to solidarity through the use of the personal pronoun *we* is observed in John F. Kennedy's speech (Washington, June 10, 1963).

"The United States, as the world knows, will never start a war. We do not want a war. We do not now expect a war. This generation of Americans has already had enough - more than enough - of war and hate and oppression. We shall be prepared if others wish it. We shall be alert to try to stop it. But we shall also do our part to build a world of peace where the weak are safe and the strong are just. We are not helpless before that task or hopeless of its success. Confident and unafraid, we labor on - not toward a strategy of annihilation but toward a strategy of peace". President John F. Kennedy's charismatic oration used all the inherent abilities of the English language. Let's analyze some of them.

Used as a stylistic device, *repetition* acquires not only emotive charge but also aims at logical emphasis, focusing the attention of the audience on the key-phrases of the passage. In this example we have *anaphora*, a kind of repetition in which the repeated word or phrase comes at the beginning of two or more sentences (We do not, we do not. We shall be, we shall be). The second stem of the repetition present is *epiphora*, when the repeated unit is placed at the end of consecutive sentences. The word *war* is repeated in three sentences, the phrase "toward a strategy" is repeated twice. One more compositional model of repetition - *anadiplosis*, the so-called linking, can also be found in this passage. The word "enough" - the last word of one part of the utterance is repeated at the beginning of the next part, thus hooking these segments together. Furthermore, the repetition of similar sound combinations or rhyming is observed in this text. Two or even three words rhyme as in helpless-hopeless-success, confident and unafraid. The internal rhyming strongly consolidates the ideas expressed in the sentences.

Utilizing discrete stylistic devices allows President Kennedy to heighten the general idea of his speech, creating a vivid impact on the nation taken as one inseparable entity.

The idea of unity and solidarity was expressed by Martin Luther King Jr., who had spent several years promoting nonviolent demonstrations against racist discrimination.

"We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities.

We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one.

We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote.

No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream".

Rhythmic repetition of the phrase "we can never be satisfied" intensifies the beliefs of the speaker and at the same time implies distancing from the inherent existing point of view. The pronoun *we* can have different referents. Judging by this situation, it is addressed only to the African community of the United States and not to the other ethnic groups of the nation. The speech serves as a protest, the outcry of black people. Martin Luther King Jr. regards it as a unified ethnicity crippled by the manacles of segregation and discrimination.

If Martin Luther King Jr. referred to a particular racial population of African Americans, John F. Kennedy addressed the nation as a whole, trying to unite its citizens, generating sameness between all the inhabitants.

Another example of solidarity can be manifested by the use of possessive pronoun *our*.

The example is taken from Franklin D. Roosevelt's "A State of War" speech against Japan.

"There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in grave danger. With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph, so help us God".

The repetition of the possessive pronoun *our* warns the people that a precious, intangible element held dear by U.S. citizens is in danger. The nation needs urgent unification.

The idea of unification of the nation could be created by a politician using another tool -focusing on the idea of common threat.

The Soviet Union built one of the world's largest economies and came to rival the United States as a super power. Its defense industries almost matched anything the United States made. Cold War, the anti-Communist hysteria produced the climate of fear and suspicion in American history. U.S. politicians

of the time used the "war" as an instrument to their advantage. This technique was then mastered by almost all U.S. presidents as Communist threat unified the American nation for decades.

Let's elucidate this aspect by considering the following example. Dwight Eisenhower, in his run for the Presidency said: 'Take Communism, the danger greater to America. They got the secrets, which enabled them to break the American secret State Department code. They got the secrets in the atomic bomb case which enabled them to get the secret of the atomic bomb five years before they would have gotten it by their own devices.'

The anaphoric repeated usage of the phrase – "they got the secret" emphasizes the idea of a growing menace to national security. Thus, just as the pronoun *we* promotes unified solidarity, the pronoun *they* stresses and underlines another, outer group of aliens. Eisenhower's attitude towards the Soviet Union was thus concretely shaped through synonymous phrase or paraphrasing the word communism as a great danger to America

The Reagan administration's emphasis on increased military spending was in part a reflection of Ronald Reagan's strong anti-Communist views. He took a hard line against the Soviet Union, even branding it an "evil empire". Despite criticism of his policies, President Reagan remained popular. His emphasis on patriotism and national pride was approved by many Americans. His strong point – hatred towards the Soviet Union - was demonstrated in almost all of his speeches. "Our forces were growing obsolete, and nothing was being done to reduce the threat of a nuclear Armageddon that could destroy much of the world in less than a half-hour's time." Reagan proposed the idea of Star Wars, an implementation of Strategic Defense Initiative. "It is a nice weapons system-defensive, not offensive, killing missiles not people." The Great Communicator's speech had great impact on the audience. His English was fluent, witty, stylistically rich and colorful. His speech always carried the brand of individual creation. He invented new coinages, which were widely used at that time (Evil Empire, nuclear Armageddon, Star Wars). His famous slogans were – "The Russians could just take us with a phone call" or "No nuclear freeze due to danger from the evil empire".

The idea of threat generated an atmosphere of solidarity among the Americans. The elaborate usage of words with negative, even frightening connotation intensified the emotional impact on the people. Reagan was an actor; he managed to create a vision awed by the biblical prophecy of Armageddon, which he translated into an image of nuclear hell on earth.

The abrupt, sudden change put an end to the Cold War. The most significant event of Reagan's second term was a drastic cessation of Cold War hostilities which lasted decades. A new era of Soviet history began. Addressing

the United Nations in 1988, Gorbachev said: "The use or threat of force no longer can or must be an instrument of foreign policy." The next President of the United States, George Bush, in a nationally broadcast address said: "We can now take steps to make the world a less dangerous place than ever before in the nuclear age. I have asked the Soviets to go down this road with us – to destroy entire inventory of ground-launched theater nuclear weapons. Since 1988 two super powers have established new type of relationship between each other based on peace and negotiations."

If we trace back to American history and review Presidential speeches, we could mention President Kennedy's speech at the American University, in which he proposes a moratorium on above-ground nuclear testing in Washington, D.C., June 10.

"Let us reexamine our attitude toward the Soviet Union... Among the many traits the peoples of our two countries have in common, none is stronger than our mutual abhorrence to war. Almost unique among the major world powers, we have never been at war with each other. And no nation in the history of battle ever suffered more than the Soviet Union suffered in the course of the Second World War. At least 20 million lost their lives. Countless millions of homes and farms were burned or sacked. A third of the nation's territory, including nearly two thirds of its industrial base, was turned into a wasteland".

President Kennedy's speech was absolutely different, even unusual and distinct on this major issue. Here, he genuinely appreciated the Soviet people and realized how profound the effect of war on them and the country was. From the discourse analysis point of view, Kennedy used the strategy of difference, which means introduction of a new approach in emphasizing something that hasn't been said before.

The continuation of Kennedy's speech is based on the strategy of outlining common and safe future for the country.

"Let us not be blind to our differences – but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

The idea of constructing a secure and prosperous future serves as a critical function for a politician, as it addresses the whole nation. The gradual increase in emotional evaluation is realized by creating logical opposition or antithesis (let us not be blind- let us direct; if we cannot end – we can help). The climax is achieved by parallel constructions beginning with – We are. The continuation is composed by the dominating logical principle of arranging ideas.

The idealism of the Kennedy era, projects on civil rights, the strong belief in the value of diversity and equality all influenced many Americans.

Another aim pursued by a politician is to generate in his speech the idea of the uniqueness and singularity of his nation. The following quotation is taken from Reagan's speech. "We are a nation that has a government not the other way around. And this makes us special among the nations of the Earth". The common reader's initial reaction is that there is something wrong with this sentence. The fact that the country has a government cannot make it be special. But the presupposition is – American government is completely regulated by the people, it acts for the people and this makes them singular.

Political speeches have played an important role in creating national identity. The correct understanding of citizenship, solidarity, and national consciousness were implemented in the Americans' minds and souls by professional politicians.

By providing various ethnic minorities with peace and security, the United States managed to create a country with concepts of truth and respect regardless of a person's nationality or ethnic background.

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